

MAKING TRACKS



BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPRING 1995 ISSUE

A BIT OF BUTTE FALLS HISTORY

A GLIMPSE OF THE PRESENT:

The town of Butte Falls has basically remained the same for eighty years. The population remains around 350 people, a few businesses, post office, the old boarding house, a gas station, city hall, fire department, forest service, and the two schools. In the last few years we've added to that the library and Big Butte Historical Society Caboose.

To an outsider, Butte Falls probably seems like a one-horse town. But there is more, it is a town whose history is interwoven in the lives and deeds of many, many people. It's a town where if the trees could talk, they would spin tales of the past — tales to brag about — tales hidden in misunderstandings.

A Historical Society is somewhat different than a museum or an interpretative center. A historical society attempts to preserve and disseminate the history of a particular area. A historical society may also maintain a museum, but that often is not all they do. Historical societies might also publish books, collect oral histories, and maintain research libraries.

There are many good historical societies that do not have museums affiliated with them. We are fortunate to have both. We have grown from just a handful of members to over 130 members.

As members, we want to remember yesterday with fondness — look to tomorrow with anticipation — and yet be grateful that we live in such a beautiful area where the simple gifts in life come easily. And where the impossible just takes a little longer.

A GLIMPSE OF THE PAST:

Around 1906, Butte Falls grew from a tent town to a thriving community. Property and buildings were traded and sold like hot cakes. A school child wrote a paper just before Thanksgiving in 1906. The following essay will give you an idea of how this new town looked through a child's eyes:

"Butte Falls is a city of 350. It has a shut down, mill, two stores, a cinder press and a school of 17. We have Sunday school in our city, and we are preparing for entertainment and box social at Thanksgiving."

What would a school child write today about our little town?



LANDSCAPING PLANS ARE UNDERWAY



The landscape around the library/museum will soon be completed. Native plants and pathways will be included in the new park-like design.

Landscaping will include about a dozen trees and a variety of native plants. This project was made possible through grants from the Oregon State Forestry, Americorps, BBHS, Margaret Howell, and numerous volunteers.

A water tower that goes with the depot will be included in the final stage of the project. The mini-railroad park will be a great improvement.

IT'S BACK - THE GAZEBO IN THE PARK

Some of you movie buffs might remember the old comedy/mystery, "The Gazebo" starring Jack Lemmon. Well, after several years of talking and planning, a gazebo has been reconstructed in our park. A special thanks to the committee members who stuck with the arduous task of developing the gazebo and accompanying loop tour. The Big Butte Discovery Loop is nearly complete.

Brochures are available in the caboose and at City Hall.

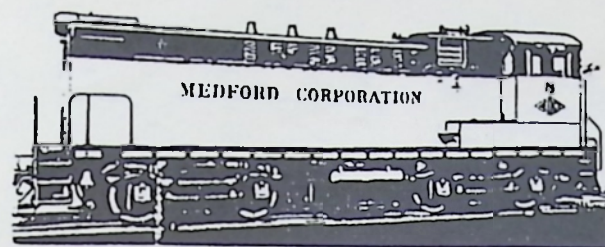
A special thanks to Ken Owens for his donation of time in the design work of the gazebo . . . and to the construction crew for the nice work.

When the gazebo is completed, it will contain historical information on how the town got its start.

BBHS MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Historical Society meetings are held the last Tuesday of each month, June 27, July 25 and August 29 at 7:00 p.m. in the library. We encourage you to attend, to express your opinions regarding the function, projects and fundraisers of the organization.

Support provided in part by the Jackson County Historical Fund



The Southern Oregon Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society has committed itself to rebuilding a portion of the former Medford Corporation (Medco) logging railroad and operating it as a tourist railroad in conjunction with the Big Butte Historical Society of Butte Falls, Oregon. We are looking for equipment to operate on this railroad, especially rolling stock of local historic interest.

Baldwin S8, construction number 75481, was built for the Medford Corporation (Medco), of Medford, Oregon in 1952 as their #8. It is doubly unique in that #8 was the only Baldwin S8 ever built with dynamic brakes (the metalwork bump just in front of the cab) and the only diesel loco Medco ever owned. Number 8 was used between Butte Falls and Medford to haul logs to the mill.

Number 8 is now in Arizona, owned by Magma Arizona Railroad Company (MARRCo). MARRCo acquired #8 when Medco terminated railroad operations in 1962. MARRCo will sell the loco to us for scrap value, \$9,700. They have a team of scrapers on site, so they can scrap the loco at any time if it isn't sold. Number 8 is currently inoperable due to a burned out main generator, but MARRCo owns and has included the replacement generator in the purchase price. The prime mover in #8 was overhauled just prior to generator problems putting it on the sidelines.

"Making Tracks" has a new look and will be published quarterly, instead of bi-monthly. All members of BBHS should receive a copy. If you do not receive a copy and would like to, please let us know. Annual membership fee is still only \$5.00 per family.

We still have a few director positions to fill on the BBHS Board. We have some neat projects coming on board — such as the new museum and the historic excursion train. If you have time to attend one meeting a month on the last Tuesday in the library at 7:00 p.m., please give Cory Hamann a call. We'd love to have you join.

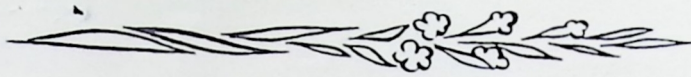
BOARD MEMBERS

Cory Hamann
Bev Carrillo

Joyce Hailicka
Lois Haes

Dan Murphy
Gloria Karches

BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICE AND NEW CABOOSE HOURS
FRIDAY 1-4 P.M., SATURDAY 10 - 4 P.M. AND SUNDAY 1-4 P.M.
HOSTESS: KAETE THOMPSON 865-3333



GONE - BUT NOT FORGOTTEN THE BUTTE FALLS CEMETERY

The Butte Falls cemetery is the oldest and only cemetery in the area and is the final resting place of many of the early pioneers and family members.

The little cemetery is an important part of the history of the people who lived and struggled to carve out a life for themselves and their families in the once rugged timber country of Butte Falls.

Through the years, the cemetery has endured some vandalism, neglect, and the ravages of time. Some concerned citizens have voiced their concern over the condition of the cemetery. Since then work has been done at the cemetery. A group of students, under the direction of naturalist, Jim Hutchins, have adopted the cemetery and have given it some necessary T.L.C.

Some communities have formed a cemetery association for the purpose of protecting, preserving and restoring their cemetery. Perhaps several people can adopt plots or small sections of the cemetery to take care of and to give special attention. Volunteers could be recruited for cemetery clean-up days, or perhaps the group could help establish an endowment fund to provide for the long-term care of the cemetery.

HISTORY IN THE MAKING A THOUGHT FOR THE DAY

In 1904 the first sawmill of Big Butte Creek was built.
In 1994 Butte Falls produced the decking for the National Monument U.S.S. Constitution first sanctioned by President George Washington.

On April 9, 1911 the first excursion train arrived in Butte Falls. In the spring of 1995 plans are currently underway to reconstruct a portion of the Medco railroad and bring back the Medco train as an historic excursion train.

In 1983 the 80 year old Butte Falls Historic Depot was sold and dismantled.

On October 11, 1990 a depot style building was brought to Butte Falls and today serves as a beautiful library/museum.

OTHER HISTORY IN THE MAKING EVENTS:

An 1890's Medco caboose has been refurbished and serves as a museum.

The park will soon have a new gazebo.

The Ernest W. Smith house will be refurbished and serve as a local history museum.



ELGA ABBOTT

Now 92 years, Elga Abbott has lived in the Butte Falls area since 1912 (he was born in Phoenix in 1902).

The former Butte Falls mayor worked for the U.S. Forest Service for a time and then for Medford Corporation for a quarter of a century.

Mr. Abbott is proud of his heritage. By many, he has been called the local historian of Butte Falls. And rightly so, for Mr. Abbott has lived her all of his life. He worked in the woods all of his adult work life.

Elga has seen many changes. One of the changes Elga was responsible for was taking out a sharp curve on a road through town on which there had been several serious accidents.

Mr. Abbott served as mayor of Butte Falls from 1960-1972. Some of the changes he has seen in town were the removal of the old wooden sidewalks, old gas light street lights, and the replacement of a hand pushed fire cart by a city fire truck.

Most recently Mr. Abbott has been instrumental in the making of historic sites around the Butte Falls area. Thank you, Mr. Abbott.

WHAT IF WE LIVED LIFE BACKWARDS?

You should die first and get it out of the way. Then you live for 20 years in an old-age home, and get kicked out when you're too young.

You get a gold watch and then you go to work. You work 40 years until you're young enough to enjoy your retirement.

You go to college, and you party until you're ready for High School.

Then you go to grade school, you become a little kid, you play, you have no responsibilities, you become a little baby, you go back into the womb, you spend your last nine months floating, and you finish off as a gleam in somebody's eye.



NAOMI FREDENBURG

Mrs. Fredenburg came to teach in the two-teacher high school in Butte Falls in 1925. The new high school building was completed in 1927. There were only three students in the graduating class and because of dropouts, only one girl graduated in 1928.

Students loved Naomi. Mrs. Fredenburg had a gentle nature. But as always there were a few pranksters. One time some mischievous boys put a smoke bomb in Naomi's old Dodge pickup. When she started it, up smoke blew and billowed from underneath in a cloud of dense black smoke. But much to the students' dismay, Mrs. Fredenburg drove off as if nothing had happened, never giving a glance backwards.

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear Members of B.B.H.S.,

Thank you one and all for your generous memberships in the Big Butte Historical Society. Our president, Cory Hamann, sent out a letter reminding our members to renew their memberships and we had an overwhelming response.

We would like to see every person in Butte Falls become a member of the Big Butte Historical Society. It is a wonderful organization which serves the community well.

In addition to collecting our railroad history in the "Caboose Museum", we are planning to purchase and renovate the former Ernest W. Smith house. The new museum will be named "The Bill Edmondson Memorial Museum".

We plan to continue to gather local history, as well as audio and visual taped histories of older residents. Each of us has known people who have enchanted us with accounts of their lives — a grandmother reminiscing about her childhood or a grandfather recalling life in the early days of logging.

Each shares with us something that whispers within us the importance of what we hear. For many and varied reasons, these recollections and experiences never get written down. Our failure to record these insights is especially unfortunate when the physical frailties of age makes obtaining this information no longer possible. Too late, we wish we personally would have done this task for them.

If you know a person who has something significant to tell, a fairly alert memory, and whose detailed recollections are not already written down or recorded, please let us know. If you like, you may call me personally (Joyce Hailicka—865-3205).

To become a member of the Big Butte Historical Society, simply send a check for \$5.00 annual membership fee, to P.O. Box 379, Butte Falls, OR 97522. You will be on our mailing list and will receive a quarterly newsletter, such as this. You may want to send a gift membership to a friend or relative. Please include your name and the name and address of the person you are sending it to.

Joyce Hailicka/Chairperson BBHS

BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MEMBERSHIP FORM - \$5.00 per household

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

Send to: BIG BUTTE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 379
Butte Falls, OR 97522

